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CONTRIBUTION WHICH CAN BE MADE TO THE SOLUTION OF THE COCA LEAF PROBLEM BY RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMMES AS PART OF A GENERAL POLICY[1]

by

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1/ The appended document by Mr. Argos Rodríguez was originally presented to the Consultative Group on Coca Leaf Problems which met at Lima from 26 November to 7 December 1962. It will represent a valuable contribution to this meeting also, and it is therefore distributed to participants.

CONTRIBUTION WHICH CAN BE MADE TO THE SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM BY RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMMES AS PART OF A GENERAL POLICY

The document on the conclusions and recommendations contained in the Report of the Consultative Group to Study Coca Leaf Problems (NAR/COCA.CONF./3) reproduces the resolutions adopted by the Economic and Social Council on the basis of that report and the principal decisions of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs relating to the same problem of coca leaf chewing. On page 5 of that document, section A entitled "Recommendations relating to the principal factors which lead to the habit of coca leaf chewing" states that the key to the problem is to improve the living conditions of the populations concerned. In the detailed analysis which follows, food is placed first among the essentials for the achievement of the desired aims, and health second, followed by housing, education, employment, expansion of agricultural credit and transport.

For the successful implementation of such a complex series of recommendations it is obviously necessary to establish a co-ordinated planning system covering all those aspects, so that none of them has to be dealt with in an improvised manner.

It follows logically that some adjustment will be necessary in order to ensure a better use of human and material natural resources in particular geographical areas. Progressive planning will be needed to achieve the desired social progress which, as far as the topic under consideration today is concerned, must take the form of an improved standard of living that will enable the indigenous populations to abandon the habit of coca leaf chewing.

In the countries which are affected by this habit we find a paradoxical situation - unsuitable areas have far too many inhabitants who as a result are socially and economically submerged, while in contrast, large areas which would provide better living prospects are almost devoid of population.

What is needed to alter that situation and promote the material advancement of areas with good potentialities?

The answer is that favourable conditions should be provided so as to attract voluntary migration from the poor area to the new area with its better living prospects, in other words, resettlement.

Obviously, before this can be done, studies are required, for instance censuses, studies of soil conditions, of the vegetable and animal species which are likely to succeed in the areas concerned, communications and market prospects for produce in sectors in which other regions are deficient, or in which there is evidence of growing needs. The term "pre-settlement" is applied to such studies.

In countries of the Andean area, like Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador, agriculture is primitive: there has been no technical progress in densely populated areas which as a result show the characteristics of under-development and accompanying poverty. Coincidentally, those deprived peasant masses provide the best medium for a spread of the habit of coca leaf chewing.

There is a state of affairs which must be remedied and the United Nations, through its Andean Indian Programme, has submitted and is carrying out plans to promote the development of new rural communities in other areas, which are being settled as a means of promoting the social, cultural and economic advancement of the Indian populations concerned.

This brings us to the topic which we have to consider today. We see that it is necessary to break away from this inadequate and unsatisfactory state of affairs through a definite plan which defines the aims in view and provides the means to achieve them. This can be accomplished by mobilizing national forces to co-operate with international agencies in order to ensure that rural labour will constitute a stimulus to constant social advancement and not a permanent sentence to poverty, as it does at present.

Thus we all of us have a certain obligation to fulfil - the citizens of the countries concerned because of the urgent necessity to integrate the inhabitants of these areas into their countries, and we technicians because we must collaborate with them to achieve concrete results. It is essential that we should combine our efforts to obtain better nutrition, clothing, employment and above all a better future for those who chew coca not as an ineradicable habit but from pressing need.

It is essential, I repeat, to encourage the creation of new rural communities in new areas as part of a technically integrated plan, to provide for their development, in other words their active participation in all aspects of national life, and to keep private and communal initiative alive in these communities

in order that they may become effective regional economic bases which will soon begin to exercise a beneficent influence around them and will not remain static and vegetate, not constituting a genuine rural community, but exhibiting all the characteristics of small broken-down villages.

The United Nations, through its Andean Indian Programme, has been working along these lines since 1953, first directing pre-settlement activities, then setting up so-called direct action centres, trying to make the centres demonstrate to neighbouring communities a new way of life, and seeking eventually to transfer executive responsibility to nationals of the country concerned.

The execution of this Andean Programme is co-ordinated by the ILO, in collaboration with the Governments of the countries concerned, and with the technical co-operation of FAO, UNESCO, WHO and other United Nations bodies.

It can be said that at the present time, apart from the general plans which are being implemented, United Nations activities are mainly concerned with three fundamental points, namely:

1. Pre-settlement studies, of which an example is the study being carried out in the Puno region of Peru by FAO in collaboration with the Ministries of Agriculture, Labour and Indian Affairs, Health, Education and Public Works. Its object, broadly speaking, is to decide which areas are suitable for settlement by Indians from the Andean plateau.

The first stage consisting in the reconnaissance of the region, bounded by the Tambopata and Inambari rivers in the Department of Puno, has been completed, and basic material, such as maps, aerophotometric surveys, and essential information on land tenure has been assembled.

The second stage will comprise detailed studies and general research with a view to achieving better land selection, and the third and final stage will consist in the regulation of the technical and institutional aspects of settlement, with emphasis on suitable crops, organization of the health system, land tenure, education, transport and communications, drainage, trade, and other economic and social aspects which are considered important. FAO is at present engaged in carrying out the first stage of this programme.

Another of the points to which the United Nations is devoting attention is the resettlement of spontaneous migration, i.e. the second basic aspect to which I referred earlier. It concerns population groups from densely populated areas which have moved on their own initiative and inclination to new areas in which comprehensive plans are needed to help the settlers to learn efficient cultivation techniques, advise them in the acquisition of suitable equipment either through rural credits or by gift, and above all ensure that their levels of education and health are adequate. The co-ordination of all these elements will we hope, make it possible to pass more rapidly through successive stages of development or general advancement. That is the case, for example, with respect to the resettlement of 25,000 families in the Tambopata Valley, Department of Puno, Peru, which have migrated from the Andean plateau, concentrating on coffee cultivation as their main activity.

The third stage to which the United Nations is devoting attention is settlement proper which in reality, is nothing but the culmination of the two earlier stages, as exemplified by the establishment of the so-called bases or centres of direct settlement which will set an example to the neighbouring indigenous communities and lead to the advancement of the region as a whole. The combined efforts of the various international agencies in the region will thus aim at transforming the simple rural communities into centres in which through training in handicrafts and other types of training , the introduction of small-scale industry is encouraged. This will help to satisfy the community's requirements, while being a source of extra earnings to the individual.

Fortunately there are already some examples of this last type of activity at Villapi, Playa Verde and Otavi on the Bolivian high plateau and at Cotoca in the eastern plain, which have already been transferred to the Bolivian Ministry of Rural Affairs. The latter administers them with the help of the various international agencies which are collaborating in the National Rural Development Plan.

In Peru the bases at Chucuito, Camicache and Taraco on the shores of lake Titicaca have their administrative centre at Puno city.

In Ecuador, there is a base at Chimborazo, with offices at Rio Bamba, an experimental workshop at Quito which operates in collaboration with Rio Bamba, and a vocational training institute at Guano where textile workers are trained. Delegates will be familiar with the situation in their own countries.

All these projects which have been in progress for some years in one form or another in various areas and in different countries pursue a clear and definite objective, as far as the United Nations is concerned, with respect to the prime beneficiary, namely the aboriginal peasant; that is to help him to help himself, and to arouse in him interest, initiative, the spirit of co-operation, the desire to feel useful, by identifying himself with the national community as an active and intelligent member of that community and not as a hindrance or a dispossessed person whom it is necessary to help everlastingly, and who remains in the same poverty-stricken state when the aid provided comes to an end.

The idea of the United Nations in setting up direct action bases with various handicraft centres is that progress will follow, that the community will not be satisfied with its handful of well constructed small dwellings or installations and that its occupants will not be regarded by others as prizewinners in a sort of international lottery, but will vie with one another in improving their living conditions.

The result of education and training should be to make the settler believe that when he ploughs, sows and harvests in a more efficient manner, he is making his future and that of his children more meaningful because he feels more sure of himself and because he thinks that his land and the nation as a whole are worth the extra effort.

National governments out of their own resources or with multilateral or unilateral aid must endeavour to co-ordinate the work as a whole and to promote activities which are in the public interest. At the same time they must do everything possible to ensure that the new rural communities which have sprung up through resettlement and the already existing urban communities will co-operate in a joint effort to strengthen their economies.

It is essential too that the technical assistance provided by the international organizations should be applied in a flexible and comprehensive manner, in close contact with national development programmes and especially with national technicians in order that the joint effort may be really effective and that both may learn the lessons of success or failure.

All that I have said so far is in line with the ideals of the United Nations, which are epitomized in the very existence of the programmes for the resettlement of the masses who have migrated spontaneously and of the bases of direct action which have been set up for this purpose. It is somewhat difficult for me to say how far these efforts have been successful, since I am directly involved myself. It is therefore necessary to hear the views of delegates on the subject, and since they, like the foreign technicians who are participating, are anxious that the programmes should succeed, it is possible that suggestions or changes will emerge which will promote the view that the United Nations had in mind in drawing up the programmes and lead to the positive results which we all desire.